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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

FRIDAY, May 23, 2003

Contact: Mickey Carter, Environmental Specialist BPA (503) 230-5885, macarter@bpa.gov

Chinook hatchery environmental analysis ready for public review

PORTLAND, Ore. – The Bonneville Power Administration released a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for the Grande Ronde – Imnaha Spring Chinook Hatchery Project, and it is available for public review and comment. The project proposes to aid the recovery of chinook salmon populations in northeastern Oregon by improving hatchery facilities in the area. Public meetings will be held in June.

“The DEIS describes the proposed facilities and the environmental effects expected from their construction and operation,” said Mickey Carter, BPA environmental specialist. “Public comments on the DEIS will help project sponsors refine the environmental analysis and decide whether or not to build the facilities.”

The project would update and modify the Lookingglass Hatchery on Lookingglass Creek (a tributary of the Grande Ronde River) and the Imnaha River Satellite Facility near Gumboot Creek. Three new facilities are proposed as well – a hatchery, an adult fish collection station on the Lostine River and a new juvenile fish rearing facility on the Imnaha River.

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“We carefully selected proposed sites near historic salmon spawning areas,” said Shaun Grassel, Nez Perce project manager. “Scientists believe rearing young salmon in their native waters will allow them to use their homing instinct to return and spawn naturally in the future.”

Project partners include the Nez Perce Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and the Bonneville Power Administration. Two facilities are on lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service in the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area and the Imnaha Wild and Scenic River area. The Bonneville Power Administration produced the DEIS with the cooperation of the Forest Service and would fund the construction and operation of the facilities if they are approved.

Many residents and several local libraries have already received copies of the DEIS or its summary in the mail. Both documents are available online at www.efw.bpa.gov under the link to environmental planning/analysis, Active Projects. Copies of either document may be requested by calling the Bonneville Power Administration document request line at (800) 622-4520.

Four public meetings to review the project and DEIS have been scheduled.

June 9, La Grande, Ore., Blue Mountain Conference Center, 4-7 pm

June 10, Enterprise, Ore., Community Connection, 4-7 pm

June 11, Imnaha, Ore., Christian Fellowship, 6-8 pm

June 12, Lostine River, Ore., BPA House on Granger Road, 4-7 pm

Comments will be accepted through July 7, 2003. Comments must be mailed to BPA Communications DM-7, P. O. Box 12999, Portland OR 97212.

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